

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023

The Center for Legal Studies and  
Research



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# About us

The Syrian Centre for Legal Studies and research was founded in Syria in 2004 and was registered as a non-profit organization in Berlin, Germany 2015. It is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit rights organization that is concerned with the dissemination and establishment of principles of the Syrian people and the rebuilding of the legal structure of the Syrian state through the publication of research and Legal studies. It also works to set up the principles of justice by providing support and legal assistance to victims of violations and to defend the detainees of opinion and conscience in Syria and work to hold human rights violators accountable by processing and submitting files to competent authorities and building the capacity of Syrian jurists to conduct.

In order to achieve its goals, it is focused on governments, decision makers, international organizations, and the general public's influence to stop violations and to hold accountable those who are in Syria.

## **Detainees of conscience and political detainees Defense Program**

The Center continues with defending and supporting the political detainees in Syria, especially those who are referred to the terrorist court, and representing them in courts. Also, providing the detainees and their families with aid and supporting them legally during the period of detention.

The aim of the program is to provide legal advice, following up and pleading before the court, payment of bails, fines, and various administrative procedures.

Also providing legal, psychological, and financial aid to the detainees inside prisons and communicating with their families.

## **Accountability and Criminal Prosecution Program**

The Center continues its work with following up and hearing testimonies of witnesses and victims, preparing files and documents of crimes, which has been committed in Syria, and following up with the trial sessions that take place in Europe in general and Germany in particular.

- On February 23, 2023, the Berlin Regional Court issued its verdict against the accused, Muwafaq. D, with life imprisonment for war crimes he committed in Syria. The accused was arrested in Berlin on August 4, 2021, and the German Public Prosecutor issued an indictment against him and referred his file to the Berlin Regional Court on 15.8.2022. The indictment was based on evidence and testimonies of the alleged victims and witnesses, which was collected by the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research, with great support from the European Center for Constitution and Human Rights. the Center worked on the file in terms of hearing and documenting testimonies and evidence and submitting them to the German Public Prosecutor. The trial of Muwaffaq D for committing war crimes was announced on 25.08.2022 in Berlin, by firing an anti-tank missile on civilians in Yarmouk Camp and since the start of trials, several witnesses and plaintiffs testified –a German military expert, a political expert, a forensic doctor, the police unit who interrogated the witnesses and the translator-, and the testimony of lawyer Anwar al-Bunni was heard as an expert. [link](#)
- On March 29, 2023, the Public Prosecutor in Paris issued an indictment and ordered the trial of Ali Mamlouk, Head of the National Security Bureau, Jamil Al-Hassan, Head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence, and Abdel Salam Mahmoud, Head of the Investigation Branch in Air Force Intelligence, “Mezzeh Military Airport.” For crimes

against humanity, in the case of Mazzen and Patrick Dabbagh, who were arrested and killed under torture. [link](#)

- A new file was open against the Syrian government 04/12/2023 in the American courts, due to the systematic and widespread torture in the Syrian detention centers. It was presented by Mr. Obada Mazik, a Syrian American who was tortured by the Syrian Air Force Intelligence Branch. With the support of the Center for Justice and Accountability in America and the participation of the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research and several Syrian and international organizations. [link](#)

- At the request of the French Public Prosecutor, the Center submitted evidence and witnesses to support an open investigation file against the organization (SESCO) which supported Shabiha groups affiliated with the National Defense in Mahrada and Suqaylabiyah (Hama) /April.

- On July 18, the head of the center met the French Public Prosecutor, and the chief of a special police unite, and talked about the work of the center, the mechanism for taking testimonies, and the cases that the Center is working on.

- On July 25, the head of the center met the Belgian Public Prosecutor, and the Belgian Police, where they talked about the work of the center, the mechanism for taking testimonies, the cases that the Center is working on, and discussed the presented files about the pursuit of criminals in Belgium.

- The Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (2 August 2023) issued an arrest warrant from the investigating judge dated 26 July 2023, against a Syrian citizen, Ahmed H, a suspected member of the Syrian regime's militia, who was then arrested by officers of the Federal Criminal Police Office in Bremen, on strong suspicion of committing crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Ahmad H. served as the local commander of the " Shabiha" militia integrated into the National Defense Forces in Tadamon, Damascus, Syria.

This militia operates on behalf of the Syrian regime, together with Branch 227 of the Syrian Military Intelligence. [link](#)

- On August 16, the Swiss Federal Court issued an arrest warrant for Rifaat al-Assad, the former vice president of Syria and uncle of the current one. On charges of committing war crimes in the city of Hama in 1982, what is known as the Hama massacre, in which about 40,000 civilians were killed.

The Center has been working on this file with its partners in TRIAL International for ten years.

- On September 17, the head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, testified before the court in Frankfurt, and explained how the center collects and documents the

testimonies of witnesses and victims, prepares files, and delivers them. Referring them to the Public Prosecution, and the mechanism of the center's work.

- On November 15, the French investigation judges issued an arrest warrant for Bashar al -Assad, Maher Al -Assad and two of their aides, Ghassan Abbas and Bassam Al - Hassan, on charges of using the banned chemical weapons against civilians in the city of Douma and the Eastern Ghouta region in 2013, which resulted in the death of more than 1,000 people.

- On November 30, in the presence and participation of the head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, in The Hague, the Netherlands, the public trial started against the suspect Mustafa D., who was part of the pro-regime militia Liwa al-Quds "Jerusalem brigade", which is working closely with the Syrian intelligence services and the Syrian armed forces. The Dutch police arrested the suspect, in May 2022.

the center contributed to the file by presenting witnesses and evidence, and the legal research issued by the center, entitled (The Fighting Integration, the General Command and Liwa al-Quds) was adopted as a reference by the investigations.

- On December 8, a 55-years-old Syrian man was arrested in the Dutch town of Gelderland, on suspicion of international crimes in Syria, who is accused of collusion in torture, and collusion in various forms of sexual violence as a crime against humanity. This is the first time that a person in the Netherlands has been accused of this serious crime. The suspect appeared before the investigating judge on December 11. The Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research contributed to supporting the file by presenting witnesses, victims, and evidence.

- On December 13, a suspect in Hezbollah was arrested on suspicion of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria.

The German Federal Public Prosecution arrested him on (12/12/2023), based on an arrest warrant issued by the investigating judge at the Federal Court of Justice dated 11/27/2023.

Syrian citizen Ammar a. was arrested by officers from the Criminal Police Office of the state of Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

The accused is strongly suspected - partially as a partner for crimes against humanity through torture and deprivation of freedom, as well as war crimes against civilians.

- On 12/19/2023, the head of the Center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, presented his testimony before the Frankfurt Court in Alaa M. case. He explained the mechanisms of the center work to document witness testimonies and the mechanisms of sending them to the Public Prosecution Office.

- The Center attends the trials against the defendant Alaa M. in Frankfurt. The center was involved in building files both on the evidence side and witnesses, against the

defendant for committing crimes against humanity during his work as a physician at the military hospital in Homs and Tishreen military hospital in Damascus, Syria. in coordination with the general prosecutor and the German authorities. The defendant is accused in systemically tutoring and aiding in other acts of ill treatment.

On 12/19/2023, the head of the Syrian Center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, presented his testimony before the Frankfurt Court related to the pursuit of Alaa M.

- The center continues to follow up cases filed in Sweden - Holland - Belgium - France - Austria - Spain related to the accountability of war criminals in Syria.

- Follow up on the trial file of Rifaat al-Assad in France and Spain and provide additional witnesses, Rifaat is being charged with crimes related to money laundry resulting from crimes committed in Syria.

- Follow up on the trial file of Rifaat al-Assad in Switzerland, with charges of committing war crimes during Hama massacre in 1981.

- Continue listening to witnesses, building, and preparing files, and coordinating with the various judicial and security authorities in Germany in particular and Europe and America.

**The center documented all the trial sessions and published a summary of each testimony and trail sessions.**

## Events

- 1- An online meeting with the Canadian Embassy in Beirut on accountability, prosecution of criminals, and discussed Canada and Netherland case against the Syrian government before the International Court of Justice and the mechanisms for activating penalties against them on 04/13/2023.

- 2- A meeting between the center's team and the Syrian Archive for coordination and cooperation on open and planned cases on prosecute the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria on 04/14/2023.

- 3- The Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research held a workshop in Berlin on May 19-21, 2023, entitled "Fundamentals of International Law and Documentation of Crimes."

20 participants from civil society activists, media professionals, lawyers and Syrian civil society organizations in Europe participated in the workshop, and 5 online activists were present.

The percentage of women among the participants was 40%, and the percentage of youth was about 95%.

The workshop included an introduction to international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law. Working groups were implemented

on the Geneva Conventions, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of sexual violence.

On the next day, a film was shown on universal jurisdiction and a detailed explanation of universal jurisdiction and the types of competent courts and their connection. In the Syrian context and the ongoing trials in Europe, related to Syria. The basic elements of documentation, the importance of information, how to collect information, methods of using it, and the challenges and problems of documentation are explained.

Implementation of working groups on specific crime cases and their documentation mechanisms

The third day, the interview with witnesses, the scientific foundations of the interview, the method of conducting it, the implementation of practical exercises, and then how to build the documentary legal file, including the statement – testimonies – and filling out forms related to testimonies through practical exercises.

The training workshop concluded with an evaluation and proposals from the participants, who emphasized the importance of the training workshop and full utilization of the information and called for holding more follow-up workshops on the same topic.

- 4- Participation in the fourth regional conference against the death penalty, organized by (Together against the Death Penalty Organization, the International Organization for Penal Reform, and the Justice Center for Human Rights Studies)

With the participation of international, regional and Arab organizations and international human rights experts, the head of the center spoke about the death penalty in Syrian laws and the immunity enjoyed by the President of the Republic and the security, army and police personnel before the judiciary, which gives them a license to carry out executions without accountability on July 11 and 12 in Amman, Jordan. [link](#)

- 5- August 24, the head of the center met with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, to discuss open files against war criminals and humanitarian criminals in Europe and America and the need to work to establish a special court in Syria through a decision of the United Nations General Assembly.
- 6- Online seminar on August 26, organized in cooperation between the center and the Syrian Democratic Left Party, in which the director of the center provides an explanation of accounting and prosecution of criminals with the participation of Syrian civil society activists and Syrian politicians.
- 7- On October 25, an online training was carried out, as the head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, trained 12 activists, human rights activists, and lawyers in the legal offices of the factions in northwestern Syria on international humanitarian law.
- 8- On December 13, the Head of the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research participated in a round table for experts organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the European Center for Constitutional Rights and Human Rights on (atrocities in



Syria: the role of accountability /justice efforts in continuous violations of human rights). Everything that was accomplished in Europe in the level of justice and accountability was presented.

The head of the center, participated and emphasized on the priority of justice and not allowing any political solution that includes the participation of criminals regarding solutions, the transitional stage, and the future of Syria.

- 9- On December 17-19 in Tunisia, the center participated in training Libyan lawyers on accountability and benefiting from the Syrian experience in the course of justice.

The head of the center, Attorney Anwar Alboni, conducted many press and media interviews and participated in various media discussions on topics about the trials taking place in Germany and Europe, and about the mechanisms, details, and results of the trials.

## **Program of disseminate knowledge on the concept of rule of law, constitution, and Human rights.**

The constitution is the fundamental law in any country, and it decides the general framework for the life, culture, and the development of any society.

we as Syrian lack the legal constitution education that we need so we can discuss and choose the best constitution that can advance the Syrians, country, people, and civilization to the ranks of advanced democratic countries. Therefore, the Center planned a program to spread awareness on the constitution and the rule of law and issued a special guide for that as well as carrying out many online and physical workshops.

The center did four workshops on "Towards a better awareness on the constitution and the rule of law in Syria" and participated in them a number of civil society activists, media persons, and lawyers, the participants were Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Syrian from Inside Syria.

The training covered a theoretical material related to the constitution, its content, constitutional systems and its relationship to other laws and the gendered constitution in comparison with international and Arab constitutions. The training included explanatory films and discussion.

The participants were divided into working groups during the three days which included "Content of the constitution - who writes the constitution - constitutional systems - rights and freedoms - the Supreme Constitutional Court - mechanisms of oversight, protection and geographical management" considering the inclusion of gender in all work groups and discussions. [link](#)

- 1- The First workshop was held in Beqaa, Lebanon on 4-7 of March 2023  
25 Person has attended the workshop, 34% of them were women, and 70% were young people.
- 2- The Second workshop was held in Beqaa, Lebanon on 10-13 of March 2023  
25 Person has attended the workshop, 34% of them were women, and 70% were young people.
- 3- The Third workshop was held in Beqaa, Lebanon on 9-11 of September 2023  
21 Person has attended the workshop, 66.5% of them were women, and 100% were young people.
- 4- The fourth workshop was held in Beqaa, Lebanon on 13-15 of September 2023  
21 Person has attended the workshop, 72.7% of them were women, and 100% were young people.

A workshop was also held on International Women's Day 03/08/2023 for thirty Syrian women refugees in the Lebanese Beqaa region, during which they talked about International Women's Day, the protection of women's rights in international law, and the absence of legal protection for women in the Syrian constitution and laws, as well as talk about the pivotal role of women in building the future of Syria. and the needs of Syrian refugee women in Lebanon. [link](#)

During the month of June, the Center held a series of online sessions on "Towards a Constitutional Culture and the Rule of Law in Syria" for university students, graduates, and civil society activists in northwest Syria.

The number of participants is 30, the percentage of women is 22%

The training dealt with the constitution, its content, constitutional systems, and its relationship to other laws. The training also included explanatory films and discussions.

## Studies

The Center has published a study with the title "Kneel or Starve" On the use of siege and starvation as a method of warfare in South Damascus.

this study analysis the use of siege and starvation against the civilian population in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk and the besieged South of Damascus from early 2013 until March 2014, when the siege was partially lifted. [link](#)

The center printed the following studies: (The State of Law and Rights in the Analysis of Laws/ Laws and Syrians - Syrians between the law of the constitution and the constitution of Sharia - the principle of separating successive Syrian authorities and constitutions) and began distributed in the cities of Suwayda and Daraa.

The Center continues with preparing a school curriculum for the first and second primary grades for Syrian students on human rights and civil education, including a guide for training teachers on teaching the subject.

The first copy was printed and under review.

## Events

- 1- An online webinar entitled (What is the constitution and the basic principles of the constitution) for activists in northwest Syria, with the participation of 91 people, on 04/11/2023. Which is a part of series to follow up with our program of spreading awareness about the constitution and rule of law and human rights.
- 2- The center started the project "Enabling Human Leaders for Camps Management" through a series of training workshops through FFC organization "FRONTLINERS FOR CHANGE", the first training workshop was held on 12-30-2023 in Lebanon, in the presence of 20 participants.  
The project aims to enhance the capabilities of the camps of camps to manage the camps effectively and sustainable, improve the quality of services provided to the displaced, and enhance coordination between administrators and donors and humanitarian organizations

## Dstouria

Dstouria is a platform established by the Center for Legal Studies and Research in order to exchange ideas and visions, spread awareness about human rights foremost, and rebuilding Syria on the basis of a sophisticated constitution that adopts the principle of separation of powers, by giving power to the people through free elections as a democratic principle for the transfer of power and the principle of the rule of fair law over all without exceptions, and the principle of justice for all and it aims to increase the knowledge of the Syrian person to be even more effective in building the Syrian society.

An application for the platform has also been developed for phones, with Android and iPhone systems.

An E-Library has been added, which includes many international laws and treaties concerned with human rights, and Syrian laws and legislation that have been published.

It also includes studies and research of the Syrian Center with various articles on specialized topics in the Syrian situation, whether on the humanitarian, legal or political level.

We were also successful to prevent and safely guard against numerous attacks and attempts to hack our platform and take control over it.

## Advocacy and Networking program

the Center took part in many events, online and physical, to spread awareness and establish a general focus on the Syrian justice and the importance of law and constitution to bring a far better future for the Syrian.

- 1- Participation in a panel discussion to present the Iranian film (To Those Who Said No) about detainees in Iran. A panel was made after the screening of the film with the lawyer Anwar Al-Bunni, head of the center, on the conditions of detainees in Syria and the comparison with the conditions of detainees in Iran. Berlin. 01/30/2023  
Organized by the Nations Organization and the Department of Prison Affairs [link](#)
- 2- Participation in A panel discussion to present the film (The Lost Souls of Syria) about the forcibly disappeared in Syria and pictures of the Caesar files, which was made after the screening of the film with the lawyer Anwar Al-Bunni, head of the center in Syria, in the presence of the families of the Caesar files, Mrs. Maryam Hallaq and the lawyer Ibrahim Qassem. Berlin / Germany 01/31/2023  
Organized by writer Garance Le Caisne and director Stéphane Malterre.
- 3- Participation in a demonstration on the anniversary of the Syrian revolution on 03/18/2023 in Berlin, Germany.
- 4- Participating in a panel discussion to present the film (The Lost Souls of Syria) about the forcibly disappeared in Syria and photos of the Caesar files, with the lawyer Anwar Al-Bunni, head of the center. Dresden / Germany 03/29/2023 and organized by (Dunya Collective). [link](#)
- 5- Participation by the Director of the Center, Attorney Anwar Al-Bunni, in the event of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Amnesty Germany on 05/11/2023, Germany, Cologne
- 6- The head of the center also visited decision-makers and organizations in New York, Washington, and Chicago from 04/24 to 04/07. The visit included several events and meetings. [link](#)
  - i. Participation in the celebration of Time magazine on 04/25/2023, New York, USA, about naming the head of the center from among the 100 influential personalities for the year 2022.
  - ii. 04/27 meeting of the head of the center with the head of the German diplomatic mission in New York. They talked about the situation in Syria, accountability mechanisms, judicial files, and the need to establish a special court for Syria by the General Assembly.
  - iii. 04/26 in New York City, a meeting honoring the head of the center by (Syria Path of the Free Organization) and (the Syrian American Consultative Council) in the presence of several American journalists, lawyers, activists, and organizations.

- iv. 04/28 meeting with Mrs. Anna De La Cruz, responsible for the Syrian file at the US State Department, and talking about the need to hold criminals accountable, increase their siege and punishment, and the need to establish a special court for Syria through the United Nations General Assembly. And the need for a clear strategy for the United States for Syria and the region.
  - v. 04/28 meeting with officials from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and talked about the judicial files filed in the United States and follow-up on "Ebada Mazik - L.S - C.M."
  - vi. 04/28 Giving a lecture at The Washington Institute on justice and its course in Europe and America
  - vii. 04/29 interview in Washington with Italian journalist (Vienna Mesa) from (Corriere della Sera) newspaper.
  - viii. 04/30 Participation in an activity organized by the Syrian American Council and in the presence of the Syrian community. They talked about what has been done in the field of accountability and global authority, and what can be done in the future and the role of Syrians in it, especially those in the United States.
  - ix. 01/05 Giving a lecture at the Middle East Institute in Washington about accountability and the need to establish a special court for Syria.
  - x. 05/02 interviews with (Center for Accountability and Justice) CJA and (International Republican Institute) IRI as supporting parties.
  - xi. 05/03 many meetings with American organizations (DT Development and Technology Organization) and (National Endowment for Democracy NED) as sponsors.
  - xii. 03/05 Meeting with James Jeffrey, the former Special Envoy for Syria, and talking about the political course of the situation in Syria and the importance of the course of justice in it.
  - xiii. 04/05 meeting with American organizations (DRL, Democracy and Liberation Support Office in the US State Department) and (FDD, Foundation for the Defense of Democracy) as supporting parties.
  - xiv. 04/05 holding meetings in Washington with the Foreign Affairs Committees in the US House of Representatives and the Senate
  - xv. 05/06 meeting with Syrians for Peace and the Syrian community in Chicago and a meeting with a member of the US House of Representatives
- 7- Participation in an organized event by The Asfari Foundation for Organizations, Activists and Politicians of Syrian Civil Society to launch a "Madaniya" platform with the aim of networking between civil society organizations.
- 8- The Center participated in the "Civil Conference" that was held in Paris 5 -6 June, in the presence of more than 180 Syrian civil institutions from various sectors and geographical regions, under the title "The Political Right of the Syrian Civil Space" with the aim of activating the role of Syrian civil society forces and ensuring its stability and effectiveness in everything Concerning the Syrian issue.

The representative of the center, lawyer Michel Shamma, presented at the conference the center's point of view that the civil society forces and its various organizations should be a party capable of making a difference in order to meet the aspirations of the Syrians to get out of this tragedy that they are living through, and to emphasize the decisive role of society in prosecuting and holding the perpetrators accountable. Crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria.

- 9- At the invitation of the German Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Justice and the Interior, and the Center for International Peace Operations, the head of the center, Attorney Anwar Al-Bunni, participated in the event of the tenth anniversary of Peacekeeping Day. The event was held in the German Parliament in Berlin on June 22.
- 10- On August 21, on the anniversary of the chemical massacre in Ghouta, Damascus, the center organized a forum on Twitter, in which the head of the center talked about the massacre and holding the perpetrators accountable. Questions and follow-ups were submitted by several activists and politicians.
- 11- The head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, participated in the international event organized by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, which launched its expanded report, entitled (Mechanisms for employing the Syrian regime, the laws that he set to control tens of thousands of homes, lands, and real estate in Homs Governorate) Paris France, October 19, 2023.
- 12- On November 21, the head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, participated in a workshop (Patterns Shaping Civil Society Activism in the WANA) organized by the German Friedrich-Ebert Foundation and a workshop for similar civil society organizations in the Middle East and North Africa on capacity building, networking, and identification of networks Common priorities.
- 13- On November 22, the head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, participated in an organized event by (German Film members) (look at the future and present of the cinema) in Berlin, Germany.
- 14- On November 27, the head of the center, lawyer Anwar Albuni, participated with activists and human rights activists, in an organized event by the German Amnesty Organization under the title "the Syrians Forum in the Diaspora (renewed hope)" Berlin - Germany
- 15- On November 29, A meeting was held between the center and the Street Organization team for cooperation in establishing a museum on (ISIS crimes in Syria and Iraq).

## **Ability building and institutionalization of the center team**

Completion of the narrative and financial report of the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research for the year 2022 [link](#)

The Center supported and helped one of its team members to obtain a high education degree, a Master in "International relations and organizations".

Implementing a private network and data storage to safely store, connect, and automate all electronic devices through a server to facilitate the transfer and exchange of data and information in a safe, fast, and straightforward way to access from anywhere for all members of the center team.

The board of directors held a meeting on 21-12-2023, discussing the activities of the center that was held in 2023, and the future activities planned for 2024.

the proposals of the board of directors were taken for developing the work in the center, and afterward, the annual narrative report and the general budget of the center were reviewed, discussed, approved, and announced.









حقوقيا  
Huquqyat



## “Kneel or Starve”

On the use of siege and starvation as a method of warfare in South Damascus

**Authors:**  
Leila Sibai  
Mariana Karkoutly











